



## A Kansas Profile in Courage

During July, as the Legislature wrestled with its special session mandate to fund our public schools, Kansans got to witness the courage of one determined Kansas lawmaker. Representative Judy Showalter, from Winfield, had missed the entire 2005 legislative session, as she battled cancer. But when the Kansas House of Representatives finally voted on a school finance plan, Representative Showalter wanted to be there.

She informed the House leadership that she would be ready to travel, if and when her vote might be needed. And Friday looked like the day. With a state trooper doing the honors, the veteran nurse and Winfield city commission member was whisked to the capitol, her daughter and a nurse at her side.

Like Johnson County Senator Barbara Allen, who also has also fought cancer and returned to participate in the special session, Representative Showalter simply wanted to do her duty, by representing her constituents and casting a vote on behalf of Kansas schoolchildren.

Once entering the House chamber, it took her fifteen minutes to work her way to her seat, as dozens of her fellow Representatives spoke with her, grasped her hand, and wished her well. Legislators gave her a long ovation when Speaker Doug Mays observed her presence and welcomed her back, as a “ray of sunshine” in “this sometimes stormy place.”

Judy Showalter’s individual courage was on display for the entire day, as she waited, well into the evening, for a school finance bill to come to a vote. Warmed by blankets, she looked on and hoped for a chance to make a difference.

More than 137 years ago, Kansas Senator Edmund Ross did make a difference, as he cast the deciding vote against the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, and his unpopular decision ultimately cost him his political career. In 1956 John F. Kennedy immortalized Ross in *Profiles in Courage*, his award-winning book on courageous actions taken by politicians.

It would have been a fitting capstone to Representative Showalter’s decades of public service if she could have voted one more time on behalf of children and schools across the state. But that never happened, as the Speaker and House Republicans continued to bottle up a responsible plan to fund Kansas schools.

But that does not diminish in any way Judy Showalter’s great determination, humanity, and courage, as she sought to do her duty. She remains an inspiration to us all, and we should honor her commitment by making one of our own – that all Kansas children go to the best possible schools.

Representative Judy Showalter died on Sunday, July 24.